

Africa in Transition

LESSON 6

Continental and World Affairs Update

Africa contains many minerals that are essential for industrial growth. It sits squarely in the middle of three of the world's most important trade routes: the Atlantic Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and the Mediterranean Sea. The fifty-three African states represent over one-fourth of all votes within the United Nations system. Still, most African countries exert little influence in world affairs because of their weak political and economic systems and limited military capabilities. This update examines four areas with respect to foreign policy in Africa: 1) relations among African states; 2) major conflicts in Africa; 3) relations outside Africa; and 4) the United States and Africa.

RELATIONS AMONG AFRICAN STATES

The Organization of African Unity (OAU)

(insert before "Other African Regional Organizations" on page 209)

The Organization of African Unity (OAU), created in 1963, long served as a sounding board for the opinions of its members on problems such as conflict and colonial legacies. It mediated border disputes and helped settle some disagreements. It gained widespread recognition for its role in combating apartheid. However, the OAU's general focus was on African liberation and maintaining the independence of African states. It experienced significant internal divisions and financial constraints. Blatant human rights violations by some African leaders were not effectively addressed because of a principle of non-interference in the affairs of independent states.

In 1999, the OAU was transformed into the African Union (AU), which has been more focused on promoting economic development and maintaining peace and security across the continent. Loosely modeled on the European Union, the AU has an Assembly of Heads of State and Government as its supreme policy-making organ. There is also a Pan-African Parliament, which debates continent-wide issues and advises the Assembly, and a Peace and Security Council (PSC), which has the power to deploy military troops and peacekeeping forces to conflict areas. By creating this latter body, the AU overturned the old OAU principle of non-interference. For example, since 2003 the AU has had a peacekeeping role in Sudan's Darfur region, first helping broker a cease-fire between the Sudanese government and rebel groups and then, in 2004, beginning a deployment of roughly 7,000 peacekeepers. In early 2008 these peacekeepers were incorporated into a joint AU/UN peacekeeping force, UNAMID (see the discussion of Sudan below). AU peacekeepers also served in Burundi in 2003 and in Somalia since 2007. And a March 2008 AU intervention in the Comoros recaptured Anjouan, one of the country's islands, from separatists; subsequently, the AU has been involved in helping stabilize the situation in the country. The PSC plans to establish an African Standby Force by 2010. Finally, by 2023 the AU plans to establish a central bank with a single African currency, as well as a human rights court.

Other African Regional Organizations

(insert before “Major Conflicts in Africa” section on page 210)

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are two of Africa’s more important subregional organizations. These organizations have worked to decrease trade barriers among member-states, settle disputes, provide subregional security, and increase subregional cooperation in such areas as transport, health, tourism, agriculture, energy, and environment. However, they have generally been hampered by a lack of resources, as well as poverty, corruption, conflict, and other challenges.

ECOWAS has made progress in the free movement of people by abandoning visas and building interstate roads and telecommunication links among its member countries. Since 2000, there has been a renewed effort to forge a monetary union with a common currency, the Eco. However, the introduction of the Eco has not yet materialized, having been postponed twice. In 2008, after many years of negotiation, ECOWAS members tentatively agreed to common external tariffs as part of their integration process. These tariffs could be implemented as early as January 2009.

SADC has also been slow in its integration efforts. As with other African subregional organizations, one significant challenge has been that SADC members often participate in multiple organizations, which sometimes overlap with SADC’s goals. Still, in August 2008 SADC launched a free-trade area among 11 of its members. The organization is planning to form a customs union by 2010 and a common market by 2015. It has also made progress in such areas as water, energy, health, and road construction.

MAJOR CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

Africa’s regional and subregional organizations highlight the increasing cooperation seen on the continent. However, no discussion of African foreign relations can ignore Africa’s violent conflicts. Here, we update the wars in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Sudan

(insert before “Ethiopia and Eritrea” on page 211)

After years of broken cease-fires and the loss of some 1.5 million lives, the Sudanese government and southern rebels finally signed a peace agreement in January 2005.¹ The deal included a permanent cease-fire, the formation of an autonomous government in the south with its own army, a national power-sharing arrangement, and an agreement to equally share southern oil revenues. Former southern rebel leader John Garang became Sudan’s first vice president. However, a month after his inauguration Garang was killed in a plane crash and was succeeded by his deputy Silva Kiir.

The implementation of the peace agreement has proved challenging. At the end of 2007, a lack of progress with such issues as north-south border demarcation and the sharing of oil revenues led to a temporary suspension of the south’s participation in the national unity government. In May 2008, northern and southern forces clashed over the disputed oil-rich town of Abyei, threatening to derail the peace accord. After two months of fighting that displaced 50,000 people, the two sides agreed to a joint patrol in the area and further negotiations on how to resolve the issue.

Also in Sudan, a horrific situation developed in the western Darfur region in 2003, after years of tension over land and grazing rights between the nomadic Arabs and black African farmers. The conflict began when rebels representing the farmers attacked government targets in protest over the government's neglect of the western region and its non-Arab population. To quell the rebel movement, the Sudanese government increased its support for local Arab militias called the Janjaweed. This group has since engaged in a genocidal campaign to drive the non-Arab ethnic groups out of the country. By 2008, as many as 200,000 to 400,000 people had been killed, and 2.5 million people were displaced.² Many of the displaced have sought refuge in UN camps in neighboring Chad, but even there they have been vulnerable to attacks by the Janjaweed.

The international community has spoken out against the atrocities committed in Darfur, and put pressure on Sudan to stop the violence. In 2004, the U.S. Congress passed a unanimous resolution calling the Darfur crisis a "genocide." While the African Union sent a peacekeeping force in 2004, many called for a more robust UN force. Indeed, as attempts to broker peace continually broke down in 2006 and 2007, the UN approved a joint 26,000-person AU/UN force, known as UNAMID. However, as of late 2008, UNAMID was seriously understaffed, with only 9,000 peacekeepers.³ In July 2008, the International Criminal Court accused Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes in Darfur, and called for his arrest.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo

(insert before "Burundi" on page 213)

The Great Lakes region of East and Central Africa has seen alarming turmoil in recent years. In 1994, genocide in Rwanda left at least 800,000 people dead.⁴ Civil war in Burundi claimed over 300,000 lives between 1993 and 2005.⁵ Over the last decade, war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has taken up to 5.4 million lives.⁶ Here, we focus on the situation in the DRC.

The DRC has a history of brutal rule and exploitation, going back to the slave trade and the treacherous colonial rule of Belgium's King Leopold I. Between 1965 and 1997, President Mobutu Sese Seko ruthlessly ruled the country with U.S. backing, accumulating a huge personal fortune. By the mid-1990s, the deterioration of the economy created tremendous popular unrest, and, in 1997, long-time rebel leader Laurent Kabila successfully ousted Mobutu with the help of the governments of Rwanda and Uganda. When Kabila and his army marched triumphantly into Kinshasa, the local population enthusiastically received them. However, the enthusiasm of the Congolese soon faded as Kabila resisted democracy, failed to jump-start the economy, and refused to allow a United Nations' investigation of a massacre led by advancing Kabila-led rebels.

In 1998, Uganda and Rwanda (the allies that helped Kabila gain power) accused Kabila of allowing DRC-based rebel groups to launch attacks into their countries. They then joined with rebellious factions in the DRC in an effort to defeat Kabila. Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Chad, and Sudan sent troops to help Kabila. The conflict was further driven by the desire of all the competing groups to gain control over the DRC's tremendous wealth in natural resources. The complex regional conflict was called "Africa's First World War." A turning point came in January 2001, when Kabila was assassinated. He was replaced by his son, Joseph Kabila, who quickly worked to implement a peace agreement. By the end of 2002, a UN peacekeeping mission, known as MONUC, had been deployed throughout the country, and Angolan,

Namibian, and Zimbabwean troops had been withdrawn. In April 2003, a new constitution was signed that provided for the installation of a provisional government headed by Joseph Kabila. Four vice presidents, representing the various competing factions, were also put in place.

While the new government represented significant progress, it was unable to stop the fighting. By mid-2006, escalating violence had led the UN to expand its mission to 17,500 troops, making MONUC the largest peacekeeping force in the world. Still, in July 2006, the DRC held its first multiparty elections since 1960. Joseph Kabila won 45 percent of the vote while his main opponent, Jean-Pierre Bemba, took 20 percent. Since neither candidate held more than 50 percent of the vote, a runoff was held between the two men in October 2006, which was won by Kabila.

In January 2008, the Kabila government and rebel groups signed a new peace deal mediated by the United States, the European Union, and the African Union. The Goma Peace Agreement, as it is known, calls for integrating various armed groups into the DRC Army and immediate deployment of UN peacekeepers into areas occupied by the rebels. However, the peace deal has failed to lessen the mounting death toll. Since the signing of the Goma agreement, there have been at least 200 ceasefire violations. Forty-five thousand people caught up in the turmoil continue to die each month, the vast majority from starvation and preventable diseases, such as malaria, diarrhea, and pneumonia.⁷

RELATIONS OUTSIDE AFRICA

(insert before “The Middle East” on page 217)

African states have active relations with foreign organizations and countries outside of Africa. For example, many rely on the United Nations and its different agencies for extensive help in such areas as economics, health, and security. In 2008, the UN had seven ongoing peacekeeping missions in Africa. These operations were located in Central African Republic/Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Darfur, the DRC, Liberia, Sudan, and Western Sahara. Africans are also significant contributors to UN peacekeeping operations. Nine of the top twenty contributors of military personnel to UN operations are African countries.⁸ In part because of their extensive participation in UN operations, as well as their prominent role in continental affairs, South Africa and Nigeria have worked to gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

By 1980, no European country ruled any African country, but for most African states, Europe remained an important player. Tens of thousands of Africans moved to France, Britain, and other European states in the second half of the twentieth century. Today, close to half of Africa’s trade is with Europe.⁹ In 2006, Europe provided over \$22 billion in development assistance to the continent.¹⁰ Through the Commonwealth of Nations, eighteen former British colonies in Africa have close ties with Britain. Thirty African states have close ties with France through La Francophonie, the community of French-speaking peoples. Fourteen of these states, most of which formerly constituted French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa, maintain even closer ties with France as members of the Franc Zone, which ties their currencies to the euro.

THE UNITED STATES AND AFRICA

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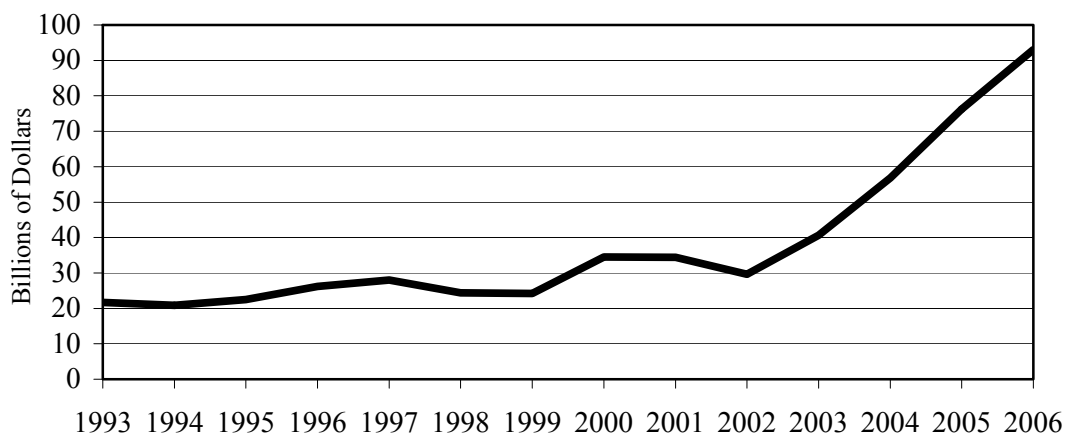
Before World War II, the United States generally recognized Europe’s dominant position in Africa and rarely showed significant interest in the continent. This changed after World War II,

when the United States expressed support for decolonization. The Cold War was also important, as Africa again became part of the global chessboard.

Today, the United States has significant economic connections to Africa in the areas of aid and trade. For example, in 2004, President Bush established the Millennium Challenge Account. This program aims to increase development assistance to the world's poor countries that demonstrate commitment to political and economic reforms, control of corruption, and respect for civil liberties. Nineteen African countries have been approved to participate in this program for a total of over \$4.5 billion in aid.¹¹

In the late 1990s, the Clinton Administration strongly supported passage of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), with the goal of assisting sub-Saharan African economies and improving economic relations between the region and the United States. In 1998, the House of Representatives passed the AGOA legislation; however, the Senate rejected it because of strong opposition from labor unions and the textile industry. Congress feared that increased imports from Africa would undermine the American textile industry and hurt American workers. The bill was reintroduced in 1999 and signed into law in May 2000. It has contributed to increasing U.S.-African trade since the turn of the century (see Chart 1; see also the update for Lesson 3, "Economics").

Chart 1
U.S.-African Trade



Source: IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook*, 2000, 2007

[\(click here for enlarged version of chart\)](#)

Under AGOA, forty-one sub-Saharan African countries receive trade preferences for exports to the United States.¹² To be eligible for AGOA benefits, African countries must show they are working toward establishing a market-based economy, instituting the rule of law, eliminating barriers to U.S. trade and investment, creating economic policies that reduce poverty, protecting worker rights, and implementing a system to combat corruption. Since its inception, U.S. AGOA-related imports of African goods have increased six fold, and tens of thousands of jobs have been created in Africa.¹³ Initially, many of these jobs were in the textile industry, though textile-related job growth subsequently declined because of increased competition from China. In

2008, key U.S. imports under AGOA include crude oil, minerals, transportation equipment, and agricultural products, as well as textiles. Initially, AGOA was set to expire in 2008; however, in 2004 Congress extended the act until 2015.

For more recent information, please visit the timelines at www.southerncenter.org.

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¹ “Country Profile: Sudan,” *BBC News*, July 15, 2008.

² BBC News, “Q&A: Sudan’s Darfur Conflict,” July 15, 2008 and Save Darfur, “The Genocide in Darfur,” briefing paper, June 2008, http://savedarfur.org/pages/background/#_edn2 (accessed August 14, 2008).

³ African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur - UNAMID, “Facts and Figures,” <http://www.un.org/depts/dpko/missions/unamid/facts.html> (accessed October 16, 2008).

⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica Online 2008, s.v. “Rwanda.”

⁵ Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2008, s.v. “Burundi.”

⁶ Lydia Polgreen, “Congo’s Death Rate Remains Unchanged Since War Ended in 2003,” *The New York Times*, January 23, 2008.

⁷ Human Rights Watch, “DR Congo: Peace Process Fragile, Civilians at Risk,” July 29, 2008, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/07/28/congo19486.htm> (accessed October 18, 2008) and Nile Gardiner, “Law of the Jungle,” *The Heritage Foundation*, May 1, 2008, <http://www.heritage.org/Press/Commentary/ed043008c.cfm> (accessed October 18, 2008).

⁸ United Nations Peacekeeping, “Monthly Summary of Contributions (Military Observers, Police and Troops), June 30, 2008,” http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/2008/jun08_1.pdf (accessed October 18, 2008).

⁹ International Monetary Fund (IMF), *Direction of Trade Statistics: Quarterly* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, March 2008).

¹⁰ Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), OECD StatExtracts, http://stats.oecd.org/wbos/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=ODA_RECIPIENT_REGION (ODA by Recipient by Region; accessed August 15, 2008).

¹¹ Millennium Challenge Corporation, “MCC in Africa: A Partnership for Success,” <http://www.mcc.gov/programs/africa/index.php> (accessed October 19, 2008).

¹² AGOA, “Countries Eligible for AGOA Benefits,” http://www.agoa.gov/eligibility/country_eligibility.html (accessed October 15, 2008).

¹³ Office of the United States Trade Representative, “2008 Comprehensive Report on U.S. Trade and Investment Policy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa and Implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act,” the Eighth of Eight Annual Reports, May 2008, http://www.ustr.gov/assets/Trade_Development/Preference_Programs/AGOA/asset_upload_file203_14905.pdf (accessed October 15, 2008).